

PM advises V-P hopefuls to ponder carefully

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By Manan Osman and Sabri Said

GENTING HIGHLANDS, Tues. — State Umno leaders have the right to contest vice-presidential posts, but they should consider all implications before doing so, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Umno president and Prime Minister said they should also consider the possible negative implications of their decision.

Dr Mahathir said this when he was asked to comment on recent developments pertaining to the party election in November.

He was speaking to newsmen after opening the Business Ethics seminar here today. The two-day seminar is organised by the PNB Corporate Development Sdn Bhd and the Harvard Club of Malaysia.

He was asked to comment on Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's

statement that he would not be contesting the post of deputy president and whether this decision would strengthen party unity.

Dr Mahathir said it was Anwar's right to make and announce the decision.

Asked whether Anwar should contest if he receives a lot of nominations (for the deputy's post), Dr Mahathir said: "It's up to the person to accept or not.

"I also received a lot of nominations but not so many votes," he quipped in reference to the 1987 Umno general assembly when he was challenged by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for the president's post.

On State leaders who want to make a bid for the vice-presidential posts, Dr Mahathir said although it was their right to contest because Umno practised democracy, it was also their right to study all possible implications.

"They should also take

into consideration their chances of winning," he added.

Dr Mahathir felt that the possibility of disunity in Umno as a result of party elections could be reduced if Umno members maintain the existing line-up.

If they were united and maintain the status quo, it could lessen the possibility of disunity in the party, he said.

"We are fully aware that the reason for the party being declared illegal was because of the struggle for the presidency (in the 1987 Umno general assembly)."

He said when the desire for posts prevailed, various tactics would be adopted, including the "buying over" of certain people.

He said in the beginning, a lot of candidates would offer themselves for various posts but might withdraw when the election date draws nearer.

This is because by then it

may be evident some of them may not get enough support.

On Semangat 46 Youth movement's memorandum calling for an end to criticism against the Malay Rulers, Dr Mahathir said the party opposed the constitutional amendments which restrict the immunity of Rulers in their personal capacity, because of its close association with the royalty.

"The party is being led by the royal families."

He said according to the party, it opposed any wrongdoing by the Rulers but disagree with the constitutional amendments.

"How can we take action against the criminals without (amending) the laws?" he asked.

He said the party's refusal to support the Constitution Amendment Bill 1993 was tantamount to supporting criminal actions by the Rulers.